Spring has sprung

Description

Warmer, drier weather is on the way for parts of the country. As we move through the week a north–south divide develops across the UK with Scotland, Northern Ireland, northern England and parts of Wales being changeable and windy. However in the south high pressure will dominate bringing dry weather for the weekend, with the best of the weather in the Southeast.

Temperatures are expected to reach mid to high teens in the South this weekend (8th – 9th March), while northwest England and Scotland are likely to see spells of strong winds and rain and there is a risk of overnight frosts.

This is in sharp contrast to the record breaking winter we have just experienced. It was the wettest winter for the UK, England, Wales and Scotland, and the second wettest winter for Northern Ireland in the record series dating from 1910. It was the stormiest UK weather for 20 years with at least 12 major winter storms affecting the UK in two spells from mid-December to early January, and again from late January to mid-February.

For a time early next week the temperatures are expected to return to nearer normal, or slightly above, the average for the time of year (9 °C). High pressure is again expected to dominate through next week leaving largely settled conditions it should continue to feel “spring like” with some sunshine around and light winds.

When does Spring start?

Meteorologically speaking spring stretches from 1 March to the end of May. Astronomically, spring typically starts on the day of spring equinox, around the 20 March in the Northern Hemisphere.

Weather in spring is often calm and dry with temperatures rising in the day but staying cool at night.

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March 2014

Celebrating World Meteorological Day

Description

Every year on the 23rd March meteorological services around the world celebrate World

WMO

is engaging with young people through a variety of ways, including:

- A new and revamped "Youth corner" website providing fun information like 'how to make a tornado in a jar' or 'creating a portable cloud'.
- A message from the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, Ahmad Alhendawi
- A guide to having a career in meteorology

The Met Office is continually looking at ways to get young people engaged in the fascinating world of weather and climate. Here are some of the things we're doing:

Inspiring the next generation with EDF Energy

This Met Office and EDF Energy collaboration is part of a wider partnership programme to help explain our science and extend science reach into new audiences.

In 2011, the Met Office began collaborating with EDF Energy to help educate school children about weather and climate science. It's our aim to ensure that all children using EDF Energy's The Pod have a good understanding of the science underpinning the other sustainability topics they study.

The Pod has a wide reach among teachers and children across the UK. There are now more than 17,000 schools registered and over 10 million children engaged with the Pod since it began in 2008.

Teachers can download hands-on activities designed by the Met Office, which help young people engage and develop their understanding of weather and climate topics. These activities include the 'Degrees of change' which addresses historic temperature records and natural variability and 'Carbon Cycle Capers', an activity that teaches children about carbon sinks and sources.

STEM Ambassadors at the Met Office

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is at the heart of the Met Office. Without continued expertise in these fields, we would not be able to maintain its position as the United Kingdom's national weather service and a leading centre for climate research. We need to attract the brightest people and enable our employees to develop their professional skills during their careers.

One way to fulfil these aims, is to engage in STEM outreach and we have seen our STEM Ambassador team grow from 10 four years ago to more than 120 active ambassadors across the UK today. The STEM outreach programme is embedded into Met Office culture, bringing benefits to both the Met Office and its wider communities.

The work of our STEM Ambassadors varies hugely – from visits to local schools to talk about science or careers to running climate science workshops to weather balloon launches and code clubs. Ambassadors also take part in national events such as The Big Bang and work with other organisations engaged in STEM outreach.

Met Office Science Camp

In the summer of 2013, the Met Office ran a series of pilot events, providing an educational science night for young people aged 11–12 at the Met Office headquarters in Exeter.

These Met Office Science Camps have proved to be a great success. Over four events, 176 children from local schools and scout/guide groups got hands-on with STEM at the Met Office. They camped overnight in onsite conference rooms, helped along by a team of over 100 staff volunteers who represented almost every area of the Met Office's work.

The feedback from the students was overwhelmingly positive; saying they would recommend Met Office Science Camps to a friend. The feedback from staff was equally positive, saying that they would recommend volunteering to colleagues and would take part and help organise future events again.

Building on the success of Met Office Science Camp 2013 we will run four events over the summer of 2014, endeavouring to make each one bigger, louder and more fun.

Interested in a career in science?

To mark World Meteorological Day, The Royal Meteorological Society is working with the Met Office, the University of Reading, the Institute of Physics and local schools, to run a Twitter session on careers in science.

They will be answering questions on the physics of the environment and meteorology. There are some great interviewees taking part including Prof Iain Stewart, scientist and broadcaster; Prof Marshall Shepherd Director, Atmospheric Sciences Program, University of Georgia and ex President of the American Meteorological Society and academics from various universities. From industry we have experts; including Dominic Sindall, Head Catastrophe Risk Analyst at Faber Global Ltd and others. The Abbey School, Reading will also be taking part.

You can join the Twitter conversation between 2pm and 4pm on Thursday 20 March. To join in, follow @rmets and use #sciencecareers. More information on how to take part can be found here.

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March 2014

Storm in Sahara sends dust to UK

Description

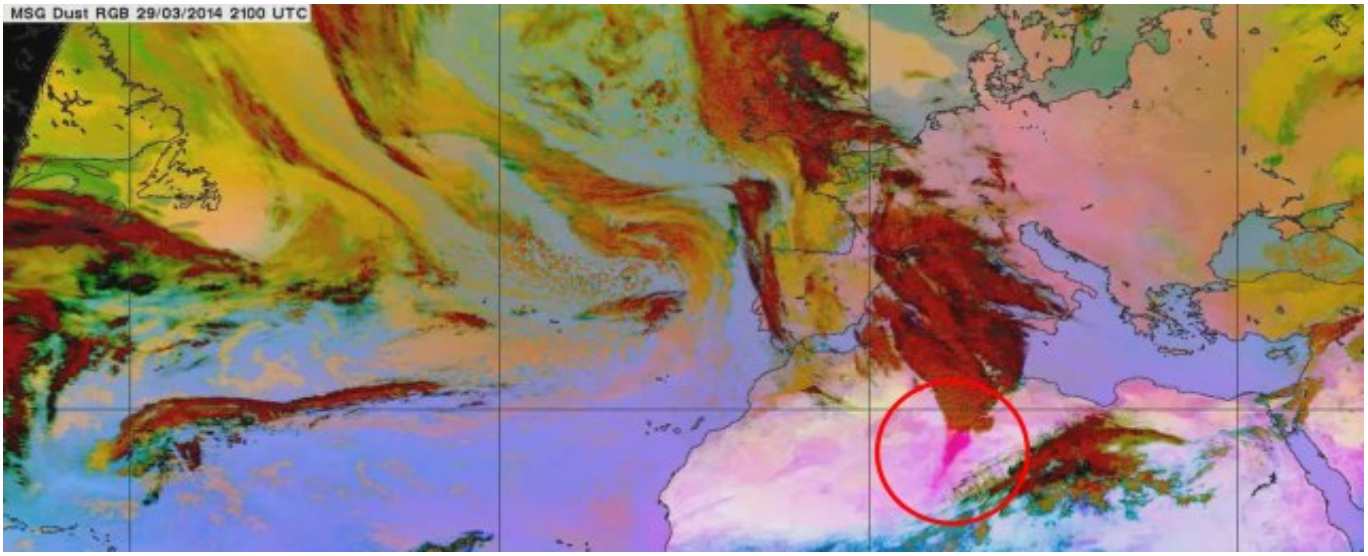
Red dust covering cars in the south this weekend was blown in from the Sahara Desert. A large amount of sand and dust was swept up by storm winds in the desert, around 2000 miles away in northwest Africa. The airborne particles were blown north to the UK where they combined with our warm air and were deposited during showers.

Paul Hutcheon at the Met Office said “We usually see this happen several times a year when big dust storms in the Sahara coincide with southerly winds to bring that dust here. More dust rain is possible during showers expected later this week.”

Saharan dust is lifted by strong winds and can reach very high altitudes; from there it can be transported worldwide by winds, covering distances of thousands of kilometers. The dust gets caught in rain droplets in clouds, falling to the ground in rain. When the water evaporates, a thin layer of dust is left on surfaces, like cars. It can also lead to vivid sunsets.

Generally winds of more than 20 miles per hour are needed to lift sand at the Saharan Desert has been experiencing some gale force winds (over 40 miles per hour).

Saharan dust is also a contributing factor to air quality in addition to pollution levels and weather conditions.



The dust, shown in pink within the red circle, is carried within clouds, shown in red, to the UK, where it falls

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